

Tanaka claims he was told to thwart probe

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Ex-sheriff's official in obstruction case to say boss ordered him

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Paul Tanaka

of absence as mayor of Gardena, and Carey, who oversaw an internal sheriff's criminal investigations unit until he retired

Paul Tanaka, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's former second-in-command, plans to tell a jury that his boss ordered him to find a way to thwart a federal probe into deputy misconduct at county jails, court papers obtained Tuesday show.

According to documents related to Tanaka's defense filed in Los Angeles federal court, the ex-undersheriff seeks to defend himself against obstruction of justice charges by arguing that he "acted on behalf of orders issued by Sheriff Leroy Baca, who was Mr. Tanaka's ranking superior officer" when the alleged conspiracy took place.

Tanaka and ex-sheriff's captain Tom Carey are scheduled to go on trial in November. Both are charged with conspiracy to obstruct justice, and each is named in one count of obstruction of justice. Carey additionally is charged with two counts of lying on the witness stand last year during the trials of co-conspirators.

If convicted, the men face the possibility of multiple years in federal prison.

Tanaka, who is on a leave

in March, have denied the charges contained in a five-count indictment returned May 13 by a federal grand jury.

Tanaka and Carey have testified for the defense at three trials thus far in a federal probe of alleged abuse of inmates at county jails.

Prosecutors contend that Tanaka oversaw a plan in 2011 to "hide" inmate-turned-informant Anthony Brown from his FBI handlers. Brown was booked and rebooked under a series of false names, and was eventually told he had been abandoned by the FBI.

Seven former Sheriff's Department officials, including two lieutenants and two sergeants, were convicted in 2014 for their roles in the cover-up. All claimed they had been following orders in assisting a legitimate investigation into how and why a cellphone had been smuggled into a jail.

The FBI was investigating claims of excessive force against inmates by sheriff's jailers, and had intended to have Brown testify before a grand jury.